

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**Draft 4-12-2010**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building  
other names/site number Snowden-Mize Drug Company Building; 005-0260-00159

## 2. Location

street & number 201 Main Street ☐ not for publication  
city or town Atchison ☐ vicinity  
state Kansas code KS county Atchison code 005 zip code 66002

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

    entered in the National Register

    determined eligible for the National Register

    determined not eligible for the National Register

    removed from the National Register

    other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
1	<b>Total</b>

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Warehouse

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American

Movements: Commercial

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick & Reinforced Concrete

walls: Brick & Reinforced Concrete

roof: Composition on Concrete

other:

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## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building, at 201 Main Street (Lots 5, 6, & 7 – Block 19 of Old Atchison) in Atchison, Atchison County, Kansas, is sited on the northwest corner of Main Street and Second Street, roughly on the eastern border of the city's central business district. Built as a drug wholesale warehouse, the three-story building is constructed of reinforced concrete with deep red brick walls and is decorated with subtle classical detailing. The Kansas City architectural firm of Sayler and Seddon designed the 56,000 square foot building in a chaste industrial architectural style. The building measures 101 feet wide by 135 feet deep and is bound on the south by a sidewalk fronting Main Street, on the east by a sidewalk fronting South Second Street, on the west by a paved parking lot and on the north by an alley. The alley on the north once housed railroad tracks which were directly adjacent to the loading dock on the north wall of the building. The structure was designed and built for the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company to house the company's offices, warehouse, and showroom.

Historically, the building's footprint sat within an area of commercial properties. The exposures were as follows: 60 feet to the north was the Byram Hotel, 85 feet to east was the Dolan Mercantile Company, 65 feet to the southeast was the Central Branch Railroad freight depot, 75 feet to south was the Union passenger depot, and 15 feet to west was a rooming house. With the exception of the former Central Branch railroad freight depot, all the other buildings have been razed. The removal of these original structures in this area left the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building standing alone as an example of Atchison's industrial age.

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## Architectural Description

### Exterior

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is three-stories tall and constructed of reinforced concrete construction with deep brick walls. The symmetrical building is oriented to the south. It is designed in a classical industrial commercial style and is ornamented with concrete trim. The building retains most of its original windows – multipaned wood doublehungs on the south and east facades and industrial wire glass in metal frames on the west façade. All windows have concrete sills. The building's brick watercourse separates the first and second stories. The flat roof is composition on concrete. Originally, the roof housed a water tower. The exact date of its removal is unknown; however, historic photographs c. 1945 note its absence.

The **south** side of the building is the primary façade, providing the main entrance.

This symmetrical façade is five bays wide with brick stringcourses at the watercourse level, above the first and third stories. The first story corbelled stringcourse contains a course of concrete above the brick, and the course above the third story consists of a double row of header bricks. The far left and right edges of each stringcourse contain concrete end caps. An eight-inch band of concrete fronts the exposed basement level. The roof parapet is capped with concrete. The basement level of bay one contains three window openings filled with glass block and surrounded by modern brick. Bay five on the basement level is identical to bay one. The center window contains 21 blocks and the two side windows each contain 9 blocks. The upper stories of the first bay each contain three joined doublehung windows. The trio on the first story consists of a center window in a 15/1 configuration surrounded by two 12/1 windows. The trios in the second and third stories consist of central 10/10 windows surrounded by 8/8 windows. A line of plain brick ornament runs down either side of the

window in bay one from the top of the third-story set to the first-story stringcourse. A wide band of concrete is located below the second-story window and a square raised brick ornament is located in the wall between the second and third story. The third-story windows contain a very wide concrete header, intersected horizontally with an extended concrete ledge, supported by two plain brackets. The basement level of bay two and bay four contains a single window opening filled with 40 glass blocks and modern brick. The upper stories each contain a pair of doublehung windows. The first-story pair contains 12/1 configuration and the upper stories contain 8/8 configurations. Bay three contains the building's primary entrance. The doorway is framed with brick pilasters and topped by a simple concrete header consisting of three horizontal protruding bands. A section of painted red concrete is located directly below this header with end plaques, "19" on the left and "11" on the right. The wood and glass doors are surrounded on either side by wood and glass sidelights and topped by a large glass transom. This doorway configuration is a replacement for an earlier one that included multiple lights in the transom and doors. The second and third stories of bay three contain pairs of windows in an 8/8 configuration with the exception of a white-washed board which cover the right lower section of the third story in bay three. Bays four and five are identical to bays one and two.

The **east** façade of the building is also a primary façade, facing South Second Street. It is ornamented in the same manner as the south façade, with matching windows, continuation of the stringcourses and identical treatment of the basement level. The east side of the building is seven bays wide. Bay one, on the south end, of the façade, is nearly identical to bay five on the south façade, except that the two left windows of the first story are filled with metal siding. An exterior stairway leads to a basement entrance in bay one, located between two side window openings. Bay two through six all generally contain pairs of double hung windows in each story and glass block windows in the basement level, as seen in the south façade. The first story windows are 12/1 and the second and third story windows are in 8/8 configurations. Exceptions include the following windows filled with metal vents: in bay two, the left windows on the second and third stories; in bay three, the right window on the first story; in bay five, the right window on the second story; in bay six, the left window of the third story. The third-story windows in bay five are covered with metal siding, leaving a central narrow window opening. Bay seven was originally identical to bay one, minus the exterior stairway, but the windows have received alterations. Those on the third story have been boarded over, except for one central two-paned window and two large metal exhaust pipes now protrude from the space. Four of the upper multiple panes in both of the first story windows have been replaced with solid panes.

The **north** side of the building is purely functional revealing the grid of the building's concrete structural system filled in with brick or concrete. The five bays of the façade are defined by vertical concrete support beams that gradually taper toward the top of the building. Bands of concrete span the wall above and below the third story. The upper edge of the roof contains metal ridging, and the basement level of the building is concrete. Bay one contains solid concrete in the third story and brick in the first and second stories. A former doorway in the first story has been filled with modern brick. Bay two contains concrete on the third story and boarded over window openings in the second story. A window opening filled with brick is located in the left portion of the first story and the building's covered loading dock begins in the right portion of this bay. A set of concrete steps lead up to the loading dock, which is covered by a tan metal shed. This dock extends to the right edge of the fourth bay. The loading dock appears to have few alterations from its original design. The third story of bays three and four are filled with concrete and the second story is filled with brick, except for a band of brick that runs down the right side of bay four. A central metal chute extends from the second story of bay four, running to the edge of the loading dock shed. Bay five contains brick on all three stories.

The **west** side of the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is also purely functional and, like the north side, the grid of the building's concrete support system defines its seven bays. Vertical support beams rise and taper from the concrete basement to the top of the third story and wide horizontal bands are placed on each story. The ridge of the roof is capped with metal edging. Unless noted, all windows on this façade are metal doublehangs

with wire-metal panes in a 2/2 configuration. The first bay contains a double metal door with a glass block transom in the first story. The second story contains three windows - originally two 2/2 surrounding a 3/3. The upper portion of the left window in bay one contains a metal duct and the upper portion of the center window has been boarded over. An air conditioning unit is visible in the upper portion of the third window. The third story has two windows; the lower portion of the right window accommodates metal vents. Bay two contains two windows in the third story. The left window in the second story has been filled with brick, but the right window is intact. The first story has a left large window opening and a small right window opening; both openings have been filled with brick. The basement level of bays two through seven each contain two window openings filled with block glass. Bays three, four and five all have two windows on the second and third stories and three small window openings, filled with brick, on the first story. One of the windows contains an air conditioning unit and two others have small metal vents protruding from them. A fire escape is located between bays six and seven, zigzagging between the third story of bay six to the second story of bay seven and back again to the first story of bay six. Ladders also extend from the fire escape to the roof and ground. Bays six contains two large window openings, filled with brick, in the first story, two windows in the second story and in the third story, a window in the left portion and a metal and glass door in the right portion. Bay seven contains two large window openings, filled with brick, in the first story, a metal and glass door and a window in the second story and two window openings, filled with brick, in the third story. A large exhaust vent protrudes from the left basement window in bay seven.

## Interior

Until July 2009, the three floors and basement level of the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building were occupied by BIC Graphics USA. Currently, the building is unoccupied. However, renovation of the first floor is currently in progress, and new tenants are expected to take occupancy in late March of 2010. The owner has leased the first floor to Northeast Kansas Guidance Center's Atchison office for a period of ten years. The building's upper two stories will remain vacant at this time. The owner plans to convert the upper stories to housing at a later date.

The principle entrance to the building is via a doorway at the street level located in the third bay of the south side. Inside, a vestibule is dominated by a set of wide marble steps leading up to a wood and glass door that enters the first story. The vestibule's threshold at the street level entrance and first story is inlaid with a thin embellishment of mosaic tile. The stairway features brass handrails which are original to the building. A reception area at the top of the entrance stairway holds a curved desk and soffit. At the time of original construction, the only "finished" spaces in the building were the offices, showroom, and reception area located on the south side of the building's first story. This area was renovated in 1946. Renovation included enclosing the executive offices, providing the lobby/reception area with an enclosed curved desk, enlarging the showroom and air-conditioning the first floor with multiple window units.<sup>1</sup> These areas were paneled with light birch plywood. The 1946 renovations were reflective of the period, but the changes were not character defining and were not carried throughout the building. A conference room dating to 1946 is located in the south-central area of the first floor. An original walk-in safe is adjacent to the conference room; it is built into the walls of the building and is in working condition. The safe contains shelving units throughout its interior. Current rehabilitation of the first floor includes removal of the suspended ceiling and birch paneling in the large room in the southwest corner of the first floor thereby exposing the original walls, columns, ceilings, and windows in this space. Additional development of the first floor includes construction of additional office space, new carpeting, suspended ceilings, and painting. The rehabilitation acknowledges the need to preserve the building's distinctive historic fabric and character by adapting to continuing and changing uses.

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<sup>1</sup>"Snowden-Mize Drug Company Has Served Midwest 37 Years". *Kansas Business Magazine*, Vol. 16, No.5 (May 1948), 10.

The interior of the building retains much of its original warehouse configuration and finishes. Each floor of the factory was designed as open space to house the company's production and storage areas. The second and third stories of the building are very similar in appearance. Each has brick exterior walls, concrete columns, poured concrete floors and corrugated concrete ceilings. Interestingly, the concrete support columns in the basement and on the second story are square with spreading square capitals whereas the columns on the first and third stories are octagonal with sloped octagonal capitals. Both stories contain rows of columns that run four wide and five deep, plus engaged columns at each wall. Ceilings are of fireproof construction.

Circulation within the building is accommodated by a narrow enclosed stairway servicing all floors and is located near the north end of the building. Additionally, there is a single freight elevator adjacent to the central stairs giving access to all floors. Original single automatic standard fire doors are located at the north end of each floor.

The Wherrett –Mize Drug Company Building has been well-maintained and is in excellent condition today. It has been served well by its solid design and construction materials and it retains much of its integrity. Overall, the exterior and interior character-defining features remain intact.

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1911 through 1960

### Significant Dates

1911-1912 Date of Construction

1946 Renovation 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Office Space

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Sayler & Sedden - Architect

Reyburn-Laird Real Estate Building & Construction

Company - Builder

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance began with the building's date of construction in 1911 and concluded in 1960 representing the fifty-year mark of historical significance for properties in continued use. The building continued to function in a commercial manner from the date of its construction through 1960.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

### Significance

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building (1911-1912) is significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. The building is significant because it reflects the commercial activities of a drug wholesale warehouse in Atchison, Kansas and is also representative as one of the important long-standing industries in Atchison. This early 20<sup>th</sup> century building was impacted by the various transportation systems in the area specifically the railroad. Warehouses, like the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building, served as part of chain that linked communities to transportation systems and contributed to the development of towns and cities.<sup>2</sup>

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent example of an industrial warehouse building. The building embodies the distinctive characteristics of a turn-of-the-century industrial building constructed of reinforced concrete. Located in Atchison, Kansas and constructed when the city was a vibrant industrial and manufacturing center. The area suffered from significant disinvestment in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was plagued with two debilitating floods which severely changed the infrastructure of the city. The Wherrett-Mize Drug Warehouse Building stands as a locally rare and remarkably intact example of its type and is additionally a representational example of one of three known extant works of the Kansas City architectural firm of Saylor and Sedden in the city. The period of significance has been designated as 1911 when the building was constructed through 1960.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

### Criterion A

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is historically significant as an example of industrial growth and commercialism in Atchison, Kansas. The use of warehouses in Atchison was expanded during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and helped transform the city into a competitive distribution center in the Midwest. Industries chose this site because of its centralized location in the Midwest, and its accessibility to various transportation systems. Historically, the warehouse's landscape reflected the genesis and evolution of the surrounding industrial growth.

Atchison, Kansas was established and grew on the banks of one of America's major transportation arteries, the Missouri River. As the community of Atchison was being established in 1858, the possible commercial and industrial significance of the town was already quite apparent. Certainly one of the leading factors motivating industry to locate in Atchison, whether by design or providence, was the exceptional location with respect to the Missouri River and its prime location in the Midwest. The geographic location - a great western bend in the Missouri River - provided a unique and invaluable opportunity. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad chose this community as the starting point for its vast western railroad network. This transportation heritage, in turn, was also instrumental in Atchison becoming a major business and industry center with manufacturing employment ranking among the highest in Kansas. From 1911 – 1915, several warehouses were constructed in the city. They were built to accommodate the expanding commercialism. These buildings were tangible reminders of Atchison's beginnings as a center of industry and commerce. The economic prosperity was reflected in the large industrial warehouses, plants, and manufacturing firms which called Atchison home. As a result, industrial production values and rigorous blue collar work ethic were deeply woven into the fabric of the

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<sup>2</sup>Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design*, Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988, 10.



community. As new elements and modes of transportation came into dominance, Atchison became a multi-faceted transportation system that offered opportunities for efficiency in the shipment of raw materials and finished products. However, railways remained the predominate mode of transportation. At the time of the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building construction in 1911, the following railroads ran through Atchison: Burlington & Missouri River; Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific; Hannibal & St. Joseph; Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs; and the Missouri Pacific.

An article in the *Atchison Daily Globe* dated 13 May 1911 and entitled “Atchison An Ideal Center” boasted that Atchison had 100 manufacturing firms and all were reporting profits. It indicated four established firms had recently expanded their manufacturing facilities and installed larger and more efficient equipment due to the urgency of demand. The article asked the rhetorical question to its readers–“Why was Atchison progressing?” The question was answered by outlining the following reasons: the community’s business interests were built upon a solid foundation; Atchison products were built to sell in and out of prosperity seasons; every article manufactured in this city was a repeater; and there were no “novelty or get-rich-quick schemes” tolerated in Atchison because the manufacturing atmosphere was too pure to allow the promoters of such propositions to thrive in. The importance of railroads especially all the significant railroads in Kansas and Nebraska running through Atchison were also cited as key components in making Atchison an ideal center not only due to transportation venues but also due to the investment of Eastern capital.<sup>3</sup>

Atchison’s wholesalers were shipping goods out of the city daily in 1911. “Every day from 1 to 10 (rail way) car loads of goods are shipped out into the surrounding trade territory from the warehouses of Atchison wholesale establishments.”<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the warehouses were inextricably connected to the rail yards along the riverbanks that fed the commercial activities of the area. Other reasons for growth were attributed to the reputation and determination of the companies themselves. “The head of the wholesale firms have worked long and hard to build up an atmosphere of quality around the name of Atchison. They would rather surrender most any other asset of their business than the high standard of excellence which they maintain for Atchison goods and services.”<sup>5</sup>

The following statistics were released by the *Atchison Daily Champion* in an article entitled, “Manufactures in Atchison Kansas: The Census Bureau’s Tentative Summary of 1909.” The figures from the period of 1904 to 1909 showed steady growth in the area. “There were 68 establishments in 1909, as compared with 60 in 1904; an increase of 8 or 13 per cent. The value of products in 1909 was \$4,405,000, and \$3,829,000 in 1904; an increase of \$576,000 or 15 per cent. The average per establishment was approximately \$65,000 in 1909 and \$64,000 in 1904.”<sup>6</sup> Apparently, this steady growth leads to the development of further industry in the area.

With the advent of a new building boom in 1911, Atchison continued its transformation into one of the most prosperous industrial and commercial communities in the state of Kansas and the Midwest. Although, the population decreased slightly during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city of Atchison became a hub for the increased industrial and commercial activity. On 30 December 1911, the *Atchison Daily Globe* produced the attached drawing. (See Figure 1.) Progress and the construction of new industrial warehouses in the city were the predominate theme. The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company certainly benefitted from its location along the railroad tracks. The company became a successful enterprise, in part because it could transport goods it marketed, produced and sold with great efficiency. The company’s goods included pharmaceutical drugs, patent medicines, toiletries, sundries, gifts and toys. The company took advantage of the railroad by marketing and

<sup>3</sup>The *Atchison Daily Globe*, 13 May 1911, Sec. 3, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *Atchison Daily Champion*, 15 May 1911, p. 1.

transporting its wares along their tracks throughout the Midwest. The scope of the company's distribution included Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, northern Oklahoma, eastern Colorado, southwest Iowa, and parts of New Mexico and Texas.<sup>7</sup>

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Atchison became a major industrial and commercial center in the Midwest. Atchison's geographic placement on the Missouri River, and its position in the Midwest created an environment ripe for the development of industry. Water and rail transportation fed the city's growth. Nourished by the stamina and determination of industrious and hard-working businessmen, Atchison became one of the Midwest hubs of trading and shipping. The railroads not only facilitated the growth of the industries tied to them, they shaped the physical and commercial growth of Atchison.

### **Criterion C**

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent local example of industrial architecture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building illustrates principles of an architectural approach which includes very subdued Classical elements and decorative restraint typical of industrial buildings. Finally, as an architectural style, the building illustrates a transitional period in industrial design, from one that abandoned pure function to one that sought balance between function and beauty.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century America, industrial buildings were built similarly to their residential counterparts: a post-and-beam structural system in brick and timber generally enveloped by brick or stone cladding. These buildings were characterized by pitched roofs, with gabled ends and windows that occurred as openings in the walls which were topped by segmental arched lintels and seated on flat sills. The industrial appearance of the buildings came from their height and lack of ornamentation rather than from any real architectural distinction. However, this structural system eventually limited the size of the industrial building so that in many respects industrial and residential architecture from this period hardly differed.<sup>8</sup>

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of engineering upon architecture resulted in a new approach to tradition and historic materiality. Roebling's American bridges and those in France by Eiffel were not only truly elegant in style, but they employed the use of iron and steel to solve structural problems. As the century ended, the use of concrete took on a new form and was being reinforced with steel. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reinforced concrete was being used in European residential and commercial structures. American architect Albert Kahn played a significant role in expanding the applications for reinforced concrete after 1903. Some have argued that Kahn was more of an engineer than an architect, but it is this disciplinary marriage that produced the reinforced concrete frame that Kahn employed to allow broad, clear open spaces for the operation of production lines in American automobile factories.<sup>9</sup>

Industrial architecture captured the attention of architects during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Engineers dominated industrial design during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They cared less about style than about experimenting with materials, building techniques, and forms that best suited the function of the building. Architectural details such as mansard roofs, elaborate cupolas, or Grecian temple-like entrances often adorned engineer-designed buildings as afterthoughts; for the most part, however, engineers eschewed ornamental details. In contrast, architects, increasingly trained in Classical architecture, art and architectural history defined themselves as artists and considered the pursuit of beauty as paramount in architectural design. They often frowned upon

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<sup>7</sup> *Atchison Daily Globe*, 18 October 1952, p. 6-C.

<sup>8</sup> Betsy Hunter Bradley. *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 201-223.

<sup>9</sup> W. Hawkins Ferry. *The Legacy of Albert Kahn*. Detroit, MI: Detroit Institute of Arts. 1970, 56-72.

engineers as amateurs and their austere factories as eyesores. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, architects across the nation cringed at what they perceived as a cacophony of cheap, overly decorated, and/or poorly designed buildings covering the landscape. In their quest for solutions to this perceived quandary, architects looked, in part, to industrial architecture both as an inspiration for restraint in modern design and as a type of architecture that could be infused with beauty.<sup>10</sup> The warehouse was approached as any other building would be: as a work of art.

The concept of incorporating aesthetics into warehouse construction evolved during the 1880s, noted especially in the warehouse at 173-175 Duane Street in New York City. (This warehouse is in the Tribeca West Historic District – a New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designation – May 1991.)<sup>11</sup> The Duane Street warehouse, designed by the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard, received accolades at the time of its construction and afterward for its functional engineering and aesthetic architecture. Architects practicing at the turn of the century began an attempt toward developing a new form of industrial design. Those specializing in industrial architecture endeavored to create structures that were pleasing while promoting a sense of purpose and strength.<sup>12</sup>

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building exemplifies the inclination towards modern trends in industrial architecture. In some ways, the design was functional. Brick, because of its fireproof nature, was the favored construction material for warehouses at the time. The wide openings at the ground level were practical for loading and unloading. Reinforced concrete transferred the weight of the walls to spaces between the windows, eliminating the need for flammable wooden headers. The reinforced concrete frame held loads so that the perimeter walls of the factory could be filled with windows to allow natural light to penetrate into the interior workspaces. This building type was particularly suited to manufacturing because of its open floor space with fewer and less obtrusive support columns, allowing for the reconfiguration of production, assembly, and shipping lines. There were additional benefits to the reinforced concrete frame that also made it suitable for warehouse use. Not only were the columns of reinforced concrete but so were floor and roof plates, producing a highly rigid structure that could carry extreme weight loads. Add to this the inherent fireproofing produced by the concrete itself, and there appeared an ideal form for the storage of materials – even those of a combustible nature.<sup>13</sup>

In his much-read tome on the topic of industrial architecture, A Concrete Atlantis, architectural critic Reyner Banham declares this early 20<sup>th</sup> century building form was significant for both its influence on building design and the effect of the resulting aesthetics. The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building demonstrates all of the characteristics of the reinforced concrete framed building including: a geometric grid of concrete columns, concrete floor and roof, broad open interior spaces, and an exterior expression of the buildings structure.

The traditional materials and design provided a sturdy reference for the building's purpose. The abundant windows were attractive as well as functional; they undoubtedly allowed a great deal of natural light into the building's interior spaces. The ground floor of industrial buildings frequently included an ornamented main entrance, as seen on the south side of this building.<sup>14</sup> A main entrance was typically designed to welcome visitors and workers while establishing character of the company within. The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building entrance facing Main Street with its corner blocks noting the year of construction clearly speaks of a

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<sup>10</sup> Bradley, 201-223.

<sup>11</sup> [www.nypap.org/archives/202](http://www.nypap.org/archives/202)

<sup>12</sup> Bradley, 217.

<sup>13</sup> Bradley, 233-234.

<sup>14</sup> Gottfried and Jennings, 11.

practical business intended to contribute to Atchison's industry. The attractive south and east facades of the building present an appealing but business-like appearance to the public thoroughfares.

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building assuredly met the design and structural requirements of its day. Reinforced concrete proved to be an economical and extremely strong material appropriate for industrial building that were several stories tall. It offered strength that would allow a wider span of columns, supported floor loads of 250 pounds per square foot and was extremely durable.<sup>15</sup> The poured concrete floors of the warehouse were sturdy enough to hold the company's wares and the building was nearly fireproof. The three stories and basement could serve in a variety of functions reflecting the thoughts during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that large buildings served as "enclosed acreage."<sup>16</sup> The ability of the Wherrett-Mize Company to house its offices and entire inventory under one roof would have been very appealing to company management.

## History

In 1911, nearly 7 years after the McPike-Fox Drug Company<sup>17</sup> moved from Atchison to Kansas City, O. E. Wherrett, owner of a drug company in Kansas City, Missouri, joined Heber B. Mize<sup>18</sup> to establish the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company. Wherrett and Mize were convinced Atchison was a logical point for wholesale distribution of drugs and medical supplies due to its geographic location and railroad connections. Heber Mize was an Atchison native, an important civic leader and a staunch Atchison promoter. The *Atchison Daily Champion* endorsed Mize as "...one of the most successful business men among the younger generation of Atchison's men of affairs. He is the main dynamo of the new Wherrett-Mize Wholesale Drug Company."<sup>19</sup> Wherrett and Mize's business plan was well-organized. Wherrett actually went on an extended trip to survey and study established wholesale drug businesses in the east.<sup>20</sup>

Prominent Atchison businessmen were the original stockholders of the company. They included William A. Carlisle and George Pennell,<sup>21</sup> Frank R. Barnes, T. E. Snowden and Samuel G. Guerrier. By March 29, 1911, the Wherrett-Mize Building Association had incorporated for \$75,000.<sup>22</sup>

Originally, the warehouse was set to be located at Fourth and Utah Streets.<sup>23</sup> However, the company ultimately decided upon the property at Second and Main Streets primarily because of its close proximity to the river and the railroad tracks. After purchasing the site, the Kansas City architectural firm of Sayler and Seddon was chosen to design the 56,000 square foot building. In May of 1911, Reyburn-Laird Real Estate Building and Construction Company was contracted to build the warehouse for a fee of \$51, 835.00.<sup>24</sup>

The new warehouse was part of a building boom experienced by Atchison in 1911. Approximately 50 buildings were constructed that year; 7 of these buildings were constructed at a cost of \$10,000 or more. At a cost of

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<sup>15</sup>Henry Grattan Tyrrell. Engineering of Shops and Factories. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1912, 53.

<sup>16</sup>Bradley, 162.

<sup>17</sup>In 1866, the McPike-Fox Drug Company was established in Atchison, Kansas. The company removed to Kansas City in 1904. One of the primary reasons for the company's departure from the city was the strict alcohol regulations imposed in the city of Atchison and the state of Kansas. The company insisted alcohol was a major component needed in the manufacturing of drugs. The state of Missouri had more lenient regulations regarding the commercial use of alcohol.

<sup>18</sup>Heber Mize was the son of E. A. Mize, one of the founders of the well-established Blish, Mize and Silliman Hardware Company in Atchison, Kansas. The company is still in business today.

<sup>19</sup>*The Atchison Daily Champion*, 29 March 1911, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Carlisle and Pennell were partners in the Carlisle-Pennell Lumber Company. Their company was involved in a number of business concerns in Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Washington.

<sup>22</sup>*Atchison Daily Champion*, 29 March 1911, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup>*The Atchison Daily Globe*, 25 February 1911, 2.

<sup>24</sup>Original Document – Contract with Reyburn-Laird Real Estate, Building & Construction Company.

\$75,000, the warehouse was second on the list.<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly, *The Atchison Daily Globe* and *The Atchison Daily Champion*, Atchison's two daily newspapers of the time, did not mention the building's construction progress; however, on March 7, 1912, the announcement of the Public Grand Opening was a main topic. The drug warehouse was described as the most modern in the country. It included a cigar room with cedar shelving, a room designed to keep sponges moist, and a "laboratory that fairly glistens with cleanliness."<sup>26</sup> "There are only three buildings built for wholesale drug companies in the United States that will equal the Atchison house. They are at Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis. They are built of reinforced concrete and are fire proof, just the same as the Wherrett-Mize building. The building comprises every modern convenience known in the erection of modern buildings."<sup>27</sup>

With the departure of O. E. Wherrett from the company in 1915, Wherrett-Mize Drug Company changed its name to the Mount-Mize Drug Company, and to Snowden-Mize Drug Company in 1920.<sup>28</sup> Until approximately 1930, the laboratory within the warehouse compounded bulk drugs and packaged them for sale and distribution. In 1932, the Snowden-Mize Drug Company expanded to include the Snowden-Mize Athletic Goods Company. Snowden-Mize Athletic Goods Company was a subsidiary of the wholesale drug firm and furnished sporting goods to schools, teams, and retail sporting goods stores throughout the Midwest. In 1946, the company "modernized" its office space within the building. The primary reason for this venture was to enlarge the showroom to display the various sundry items for sale and distribution. During its long tenure, the company continued to grow and prosper, selling drugs, patent medicines, pharmaceuticals and sundries to drug stores in the Midwest, Southwest and Texas. In 1973, the company was sold to Fox-Vliet, a wholesale drug company with headquarters in Wichita.<sup>29</sup>

Atchison Leather Products, founded in 1908, purchased the building in 1983. In 2002, the company split, becoming Atchison Leather, a wholesaler of leather goods, and Atchison Products, Inc., a wholesaler of promotional canvas totes, bags, coolers, and backpacks. In late August of 2007, BIC Graphic USA of Clearwater, Florida acquired Atchison Products, Inc. Due to declining economic trends, BIC Graphic USA closed the facility in July of 2009. The current owner, Free Country Design & Construction, Inc. purchased the building in November of 2009.

### **Architect - Sayler & Seddon**

Kansas City architects, William H. Sayler and Herbert R. Seddon, formed a partnership which spanned nearly a decade from c. 1906 until c. 1915.<sup>30</sup> They maintained offices in the Gumble Building in the heart of Kansas City's central business district. For a brief period in 1911 and 1912, the firm maintained an office at 526 ½ Commercial Street in Atchison, Kansas.<sup>31</sup> During Sayler and Seddon's tenure in Atchison, they also designed the 1911 Blish, Mize and Silliman Hardware Building at Fifth and Utah Streets and the 1915 Manglesdorf Brothers Seed Building at Eleventh and Main Streets. The firm operated in Kansas City until approximately 1915.<sup>32</sup> The designs of Sayler and Seddon, especially those in Atchison, leaned toward massive, fireproof warehouses featuring classical detailing. In an era where reinforced concrete was the cutting edge of materials

<sup>25</sup> "Some of the New Building the Year 1911 Gave Atchison." *The Atchison Daily Globe* 20 November 1911, 6. The largest and most expensive building that year was the Blish, Mize & Silliman Building costing \$175,000.

<sup>26</sup> *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 8 March 1912, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Atchison Daily Champion*, 6 March 1912, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> "Mize, Addison". *Atchison Daily Globe*, 31 December 1982, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Mize, Addison". *Atchison Daily Globe*, 31 December 1982, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *City Directories*, Kansas City, Missouri, 1900-1915.

<sup>31</sup> *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 7 July 1911, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Sayler and Seddon were responsible for at least three buildings in Kansas City: a building for M. R. and E. C. Platte at 201 Independence Avenue, a building for the Hoover Brothers at 922 Oak Street, and a firehouse at 2329 Spruce Street.

and a building's ability to withstand fire was prized above all other traits, the warehouses of Saylor and Seddon were undoubtedly remarkable.

William Saylor began his career as a draftsman working for prominent Kansas City architects Charles A. Smith in 1900 and for Shepard and Farrar in 1901. By 1904, Shepard and Farrar had promoted Saylor to the position of architect. He left the firm to establish his partnership with Seddon in 1906. After the partnership dissolved, Saylor continued to practice architecture on his own. He joined Arthur James to form the Wm. H. Saylor & Company in 1919. In 1927, he joined with two architects to form the firm of Owen, Saylor and Payson. Other known designs by Saylor include a stretch of mixed-use commercial/apartment buildings on Broadway between Fifteenth and Sixteenth Streets in Kansas City, Missouri built in 1916 and a high school in Hill City, Kansas built in 1922.<sup>33</sup> Saylor was director and president of the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1911-1916 and remained active in the organization for a number of years.<sup>34</sup>

Herbert R. Seddon was born in Kansas City in 1884. After working as a draftsman in the office of W. W. Rose in 1902 and 1903, Seddon studied architecture at the University of Illinois. He graduated in 1905 and spent the next year studying abroad. Seddon returned to Kansas City in 1906 and entered into a partnership with William Saylor. The partnership dissolved in 1914. Seddon died in Kansas City on May 17, 1916 of tuberculosis at the age of 32.<sup>35</sup>

### **Atchison History**

Atchison is picturesquely located on hills and bluffs overlooking the Missouri River in the northeast corner of Kansas. The metropolitan area of Kansas City, Topeka, and St. Joseph, Missouri are within an hour's drive.

Approximately 300 years ago, the area of present-day Atchison was home to the Kansa Indians. Their abandoned village was noted by Lewis and Clark when they explored the area on July 4, 1804. Fifty years after Lewis and Clark's visit, the Kansas Territory opened, and Atchison was one of the territory's first settlements. On July 20, 1854, a group of gentlemen from Platte City, Missouri crossed the Missouri River and staked out a town site. They named the site for David Rice Atchison, a noted Missouri senator. Atchison was incorporated on August 30, 1855, by a Special Act of the Territorial Legislature under Governor Wilson Shannon, and on February 12, 1858, the city of Atchison was incorporated under Governor Robert J. Walker. The town's early history includes a bitter rivalry between abolitionists and Missouri pro-slavery advocates. Atchison was made a city of first class on March 14, 1881 by a proclamation issued by Governor John P. St. John. Samuel C. Pomeroy was a prominent Free State settler and was the first mayor of Atchison.<sup>36</sup>

Atchison had one of the best steamboat landings on the west side of the Missouri River. Geographically, Atchison was located at a great bend in the Missouri River. This location was extremely advantageous because it was approximately 25 miles further inland than any other Midwestern city on the west side of the Missouri River; therefore, the town flourished as a leading commercial and transportation center because of it. The wagon roads west took full advantage of Atchison's geographic location. Early freight shipments bound westward were brought from St. Louis to Atchison via steamboat and then hauled by mule ox or mule across the prairie. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, founded in 1859, was a successful venture that established the city as the eastern terminus for a railroad system stretching west and south. Even early mail delivery from the town to points west developed into a million-dollar business.

<sup>33</sup> Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission. Architectural Biographical Files.

<sup>34</sup> Kansas City Architect and Builder, May 1902, p. 7.

Western Contractor, October 15, 1913, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission. Architectural Biographical Files.

<sup>36</sup> *Atchison Centennial Souvenir*, p. 5-10.

The boom years for Atchison occurred between 1870 and 1915, when major industries were established, large wholesale firms were developed and the commercial life of Atchison reached its peak. Atchison was one of first banking centers in the states. Industries grew along with the railroads, dealing in grains and milling, lumber and manufacturing.<sup>37</sup>

Construction reflected the town's prosperity. Many of the city's wealthier residents built palatial homes in the city. The town's reputation as a home to the affluent was reported in an 1898 article in the *Topeka Mail and Breeze* entitled "Atchison's Rich Folks," which described Atchison as possessing more rich men and rich widows than any other town in Kansas.<sup>38</sup> An article in the *Kansas City Star* entitled "Seeing Atchison" discussed the large number of wealthy residents and the money expended on industrial and public construction within the city.<sup>39</sup>

The financial panic of 1893, supplemented by an area drought, setback several Atchison institutions, as it did to other Midwestern businesses, especially banks and railroads. Late in the 1890; however, improvement in agricultural prices and a general increase in wages brightened the financial picture. Atchison's population between 1890 and 1900 followed suit.

The population of Atchison County dropped slightly every decade since 1900.<sup>40</sup> However, construction within the community was not static. The town's successful citizens continued to invest in Atchison's industries, businesses and neighborhoods. The town experienced a wave of commercial construction between 1910 and 1915 that included several large warehouses in the downtown area. The architecture of the town was indicative of other Kansas communities with a combination of Victorian-era houses and storefronts, and a gradual infiltration of "modern" commercial architecture and public buildings.

One of the oldest established towns in Kansas, Atchison played host in pioneer days to such notables as Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Horace Greeley, and countless others. It was the birthplace of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, and the starting places for some of America's greatest railroad leaders. Industrialists, agriculturalists, entrepreneurs, writers, journalists, musicians, churchmen and statesmen have resided in this historic community.<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company remains a tangible reminder of Atchison's rich industrial and commercial history. The importance of the warehouse lies not only in its design but also in its relationship to the major wholesale and shipping industry. The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company carried out extensive warehousing and freight operations in the Midwest.

The Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building is one of three known extant buildings in Atchison, Kansas designed during the brief partnership of architects William Sayler and Herbert Sedden. This union played a significant role in the transformation of Atchison's industrial landscape. The building embodies principles of industrial design while showcasing a modern approach to architecture including advocacy of decorative

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<sup>37</sup> *Atchison Centennial Souvenir*, p. 5-10.

<sup>38</sup> "Atchison's Rich Folks." *Topeka Mail and Breeze*, 1898 April 1, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> "Seeing Atchison." *Kansas City Star*, 5 April 1914, p 2A.

<sup>40</sup> Kansas State Board of Agriculture. *Kansas Agricultural Centennial Report, 44<sup>th</sup> Report, July 1, 1960 through June 30, 1961*. Population is listed for Atchison County as 30,369 in 1900, 25,584 in 1920, 25,747 in 1930, 22,414 in 1940 and 20,171 in 1950.

<sup>41</sup> *Atchison Centennial Souvenir*, p. 5-10.

restraints and transparency in design. Finally, the Wherrett Mize Drug Company Building stands as an excellent example in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, one that balanced function and aesthetics.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than once acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building  
Name of Property

Atchison County, Kansas  
County and State

1                                   
Zone Easting Northing

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing

2                                   
Zone Easting Northing

4                                   
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

Lot No. 5, 6, & 7 inclusive, in Block No. 19, of Old Atchison, in the City of Atchison, Atchison County, Kansas.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Elizabeth A. Lane – Professional Researcher and Genealogist

organization E. A. Lane Research Services date 17 February 2010

street & number 841 South Fourth Street telephone (913) 426-1981

city or town Atchison state KS zip code 66002-2904

e-mail ealane39@allegiance.tv

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building  
**City or Vicinity:** Atchison  
**County:** Atchison  
**State:** Kansas  
**Photographer:** Unknown

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1. c. 1912  
Location of original negative unknown – Photograph from the Private Collection of Elizabeth A. Lane  
South (front) elevation, view from south
2. c. 1935  
Location of original negative unknown – Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
South (front) elevation, view from southeast
3. c. 1920  
Location of original negative unknown - Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
Interior View of Showroom – First Floor
4. c. 1920  
Location of original negative unknown - Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
Interior View of Office Area – First Floor
5. c. 1912  
Location of original negative unknown - Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
Interior View of Loading Dock – First Floor
6. c. 1912  
Location of original negative unknown - Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
Interior View of Storage Area – Third Floor
7. c. 1912  
Location of original negative unknown - Photograph from the Collection of Atchison County Historical Society  
Interior View of Mail Room Area – First Floor

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**Property Owner:**

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Free Country Real Estate LLC – Dennis Hine, Sole Shareholderstreet & number 522 Woodlawn Avenue, P.O. Box E telephone 913-367-4752city or town Atchison state Kansas zip code 66002

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Figure 1: Progress in Atchison, Kansas - 1911.  
*Atchison Daily Globe*, 30 December 1911, p. 4.